An objective report on:

Training & Development Programs For Management Support Personnel

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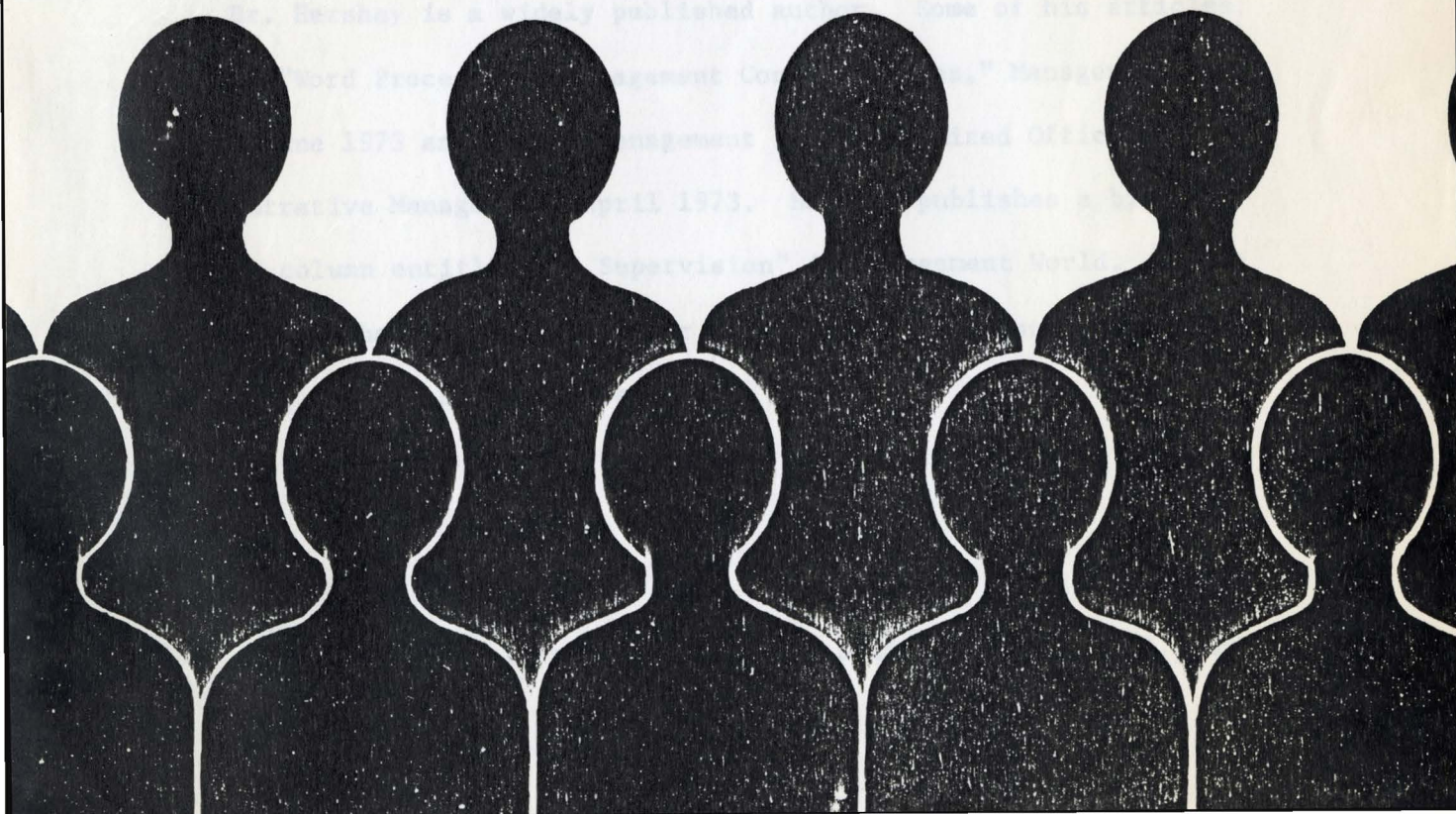
by Gerald L. Hershey



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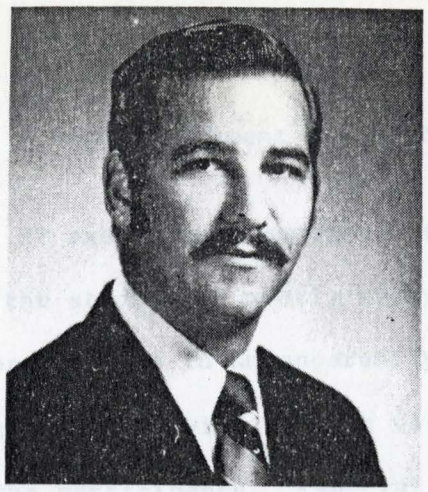

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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are extended to the 182 executives, managers, supervisors, and office employees who participated in the study. In nearly every instance, the employees presented points of view and preferences in an apparently candid manner. Hopefully, the results offered in this report will be of a value equivalent to the time and effort expended by the participants. Especial thanks are directed to that one person in each of the five participating companies who planned and organized the facilities and interview schedules for his firm.

As a result of the conscientious and skilled efforts of Mrs. Shirley Darlage, notes from each interview were carefully transcribed. Additionally, Mrs. Darlage provided diligent assistance in the organization and typing of this report.

Gerald L. Hershey
November, 1973

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Introduction

Business firms have expressed considerable interest in training and development programs for their personnel as evidenced by initiation of in-house training programs, development of facilities and appointment of managers to direct training activities. Additionally, numerous firms have been encouraging their employees to participate in various external seminars and programs sponsored by professional organizations, educational institutions and private firms. It could be concluded, based upon the above factors, that programs to train and develop personnel are viewed by top management as one means of improving employee effectiveness and productivity.

If training and development programs are viewed as potentially valuable activities to effecting increased employee performance, then, there may be merit in examining the extent to which training and development programs and opportunities are provided for various employee groups. Specifically, to what extent do business firms provide training and development activities for office (management support) personnel? How are management support personnel trained upon initial employment? How effective are current training programs? Are developmental activities and programs offered for support personnel? If developmental programs are offered, how effective are they?

In addition, a number of questions relating to the training, development, and performance of support personnel could be posed. For example:

1. What criteria and instruments are used to select support employees?
2. To what extent are performance goals and objectives for support personnel clearly delineated?

3. How are individuals who are assigned the responsibility of training new support employees selected and prepared for their trainer roles?
4. How are training needs assessed or determined?
5. Are the immediate superiors of support personnel well qualified to evaluate the performance of their support personnel?
6. To what extent do support personnel believe their abilities and skills are being utilized effectively through their present assignments?
7. To what extent do support personnel desire additional challenge and responsibility in their work assignments?
8. What procedures and criteria are used to assess the job performance of support personnel? How appropriate are the procedures?
9. Do executives, managers, and supervisors see a need to reduce support (office) activity costs? Do they feel increased training could be an effective means of reducing office costs?
10. How are managers and supervisors trained or prepared to utilize the abilities of support personnel?
11. After initial job training, what kinds of training and development programs are provided for support personnel?

The above questions provided the basis for the study reported here. It was hoped that answers to the above questions could be obtained and that the answers would be of substantial benefit to managers of organizations (private and public) interested in improving practices involving management support personnel.

Overview of the Study

Origin of the Study

Increased attention is being devoted to finding means of reducing costs of typical office activities and services as evidenced by: (1) an increasing move to physical centralization of certain office activities by some firms; (2) conversions to word processing centers; (3) attempts to reduce the number of office employees; (4) increased utilization of data processing centers, etc. The major emphasis and effort to reduce support system costs appears, however, to be directed toward increased mechanization, automation and utilization of hardware in the processing of typical office operations rather than through fuller utilization of employees to achieve higher productivity.

Secondly, management members are being confronted on an increasingly regular basis with governmental regulations urging (and sometimes forcing) adjustments in company policy and procedure to reflect more equitable opportunities for various employee groups--such as office employees. To date, a great deal of EEOC attention has not focused upon specific practices relating to office employees but it is anticipated that the near future may reveal increased attentiveness to the area by EEOC representatives. Thus, to what extent are business firms implementing practices, policies and programs for office personnel that are in line with and reflect the thrusts of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act?

Finally, the practices of business must be of concern to educators at various educational levels if the transition in role from student to employee is to be effected as smoothly as possible. Consequently, those activities involving training and development experiences for support personnel should be more fully understood by teachers preparing students for office employment.

Preliminary examination of the above three concerns--business interest in cost reduction and improved efficiency, office personnel employment and promotion opportunities, and business practices having meaning for business educators--resulted in the genesis of the research study reported here. It seemed to the

investigator that the three areas of concern were neither clearly understood nor had been carefully examined during recent times. Consequently, a study was undertaken to provide information about and possible answers to the questions listed in the Introduction and the concerns raised in this section.

Definitions of Terms as Used in This Report

Training--those activities designed to help employees perform current assignments effectively--relating to procedures, policies, machines, operations, etc.

Development--those activities intended to help employees expand and utilize potential and abilities to prepare for higher level assignments or enlarged and enriched positions.

Management Support Personnel--employees who perform office work, information processing and management assistance activities but are not considered management--examples include secretaries, typists, stenographers, accounting clerks, data processing clerks, key punchers, general clerks, etc.

Procedures of the Study

Selection of Companies

Executives in ten firms in the midwest were contacted regarding the nature of the study and their possible interest in it. Each firm contacted employed 500 or more people and each firm was determined to be typical of firms in its particular industrial group. Firms in manufacturing, banking, insurance and public utility industries were included in initial contacts.

Of the ten firms contacted, five were selected based upon having an interest in the study, being representative of firms in the industry, and having sufficient numbers of employees of the type to be studied. Of the five firms selected, two were manufacturing firms, one was a utility, one was an insurance company and one was a banking institution.

Selection of Employees

The investigator desired to personally interview employees at three different levels in each participating firm. The three levels selected were: (1) top management representatives; (2) managers and supervisors of office personnel; and, (3) numerous office personnel. The reason for including employees from various organizational levels was to learn as fully as possible the concerns, practices and beliefs relating to the study as perceived by both employees and management and thereby reduce the possibility of obtaining a rather one-sided point of view. Likewise, it was believed that multi-level comments could be compared and that the areas of agreement and disagreement would be instructive to management members of the participating firms.

In each participating firm interviews were scheduled with top management members whose primary responsibilities included at least one or more of the following areas: personnel, training, administrative and office services, and data processing. Likewise, managers and supervisors who worked directly with office personnel were selected to provide information from their supervisory perspective. Finally, the largest group of interviewees in each firm was comprised of persons employed in the following support positions or their equivalent: secretaries, stenographers, typists and clerk-typists, accounting clerk, general clerk, key punching, general data processing clerical, and computer operators.

Procedurally, the company representative selected specific individuals from the top management and management-supervisor levels to be interviewed. The selection of support personnel to be interviewed was done through invitation to employees in each of the job categories identified. The total number of employees in each office job category was identified for each firm. Then, several positions (providing a reasonable sample) were identified in each category. An announcement was made to all employees in each office job category and employees were either

invited to participate or, in some cases, the company representative selected (rather randomly) employees from each group. It was hoped that an invitation-volunteer selection procedure would reduce the possibility that atypical support personnel would be interviewed or that support employees would feel compelled to participate. Except for a very few cases (5-10 interviews), the investigator believes the selection process employed produced a sample representative of support personnel in each firm.

Interview Process

Three different sets of interview guide questions were developed. The representative coordinating the study in each firm reviewed all three sets of questions prior to agreeing to participate in the study. In two firms, one or two questions to be asked of support personnel were either revised or omitted from the interview guide sheets. In neither case was it felt that the change would influence appreciably the results of the study.

Following review and acceptance by the company representative of the interview instruments and after identification of specific personnel to be interviewed, dates and times were arranged for the actual interviews.

Top executives and managers-supervisors of support personnel were not informed of the interview questions prior to the time of the interview. It was felt that responses of executives, managers, and supervisors would tend to be more candid if they were not informed of the items before the interview. On the other hand, support personnel participating in the study were provided a guide showing the primary questions to be asked during the interview. The rationale for providing the questions to support personnel was that they might have been either reluctant to participate or unable to answer if required to respond to questions they had not previously considered.

Interviews were subsequently held with a total of 182 individuals in the five participating companies. Length of individual interviews varied from 90 or more minutes for interviews with executives and managers to an average of 30 minutes for interviews with support personnel. During each of the 182 interviews all remarks relevant to the topics being studied were recorded by the investigator in shorthand. Following each day's interviews the shorthand notes were dictated to machine and subsequently transcribed in typewritten form.

Interview Results

The Companies

Throughout the report, each company will be identified by a capital letter, i.e., Company A, etc. Following is a list of the companies whose employees participated in the study and the type of operation engaged in by each firm.

Company A -- Insurance Firm
Company B -- Banking Institution
Company C -- Public Utility
Company D -- Manufacturing Firm
Company E -- Manufacturing Firm

Each company above would be considered in a medium or large category in terms of financial worth, number of employees, and relative industry position. From all evidence available it appears reasonable to state that each company was typical of other major firms within its industry and likely employed practices, policies and people similar to those of their major competitors. Consequently, it is believed that the findings from this study could be typical of practices in other firms in industries similar to those included in the study.

It may be of interest to note that two of the five companies, Companies C and D, had office employee unions. It was also observed that Companies C and D had somewhat higher salary scales for office employees than did the three other companies participating in the study. The higher salary scales may, in part, have been influenced by union efforts and, in part, by competitors' practices and industry standards.

The Employees Interviewed

A total of 182 people employed in the five companies were interviewed, individually, by the investigator. Table 1 shows the number of employees interviewed--categorized by both company and job classifications.

TABLE 1. JOB LEVEL AND TITLE OF EMPLOYEES INTERVIEWED BY COMPANY

Positions	Company A	B	C	D	E	Total
Top Management Representatives	4	5	4	4	6	23
Managers and Supervisors	6	6	7	3	3	25
Secretaries	6	9	8	3	9	35
Stenographer	3	2	1	2	2	10
Typists (Clerk-Typist)	5	6	2	4	5	22
Accounting Clerk	3	2	6	2	5	18
General Clerk	7	2	9	1	3	22
Key Punching	2	2	3	2	1	10
Computer Operator	2	2	2	0	2	8
General Data Processing	2	5	0	0	2	9
Total	40	41	42	21	38	182

By reviewing Table 1 it can be seen that a total of 23 interviews were held with top management representatives, 25 interviews were held with managers and supervisors who worked directly with support (office) personnel, and interviews with support personnel included 134 employees. In addition, except for Companies C and D, interviews were held with employees in all categories listed.

It should be noted that Company D, while a division of a major international manufacturing organization, only employed approximately 100 persons in office positions. As a result, the number of interviews held with support personnel in Company D was lower than in the other firms where substantially higher numbers of people were employed in office positions.

Office Costs Concern

Commonly expressed objectives of employee training are to achieve higher productivity, reduce waste and errors, increase uniformity of operations, and improve employee understanding of procedures and operations. Since productivity and high costs are being increasingly cited as areas of critical concern in this country, a number of questions were asked of top executives, managers and super-

visors relating to efforts made in their companies dealing with examination and control of office costs. Office costs are those defined as being associated with office personnel, clerical work, information processing, office equipment, office space, and support activities in general.

The first question and responses to it are shown in Table 2. Of the 23 executives only two indicated their firms had examined the office costs aspect in detail. Fifteen (15) of the 23 reported they had employed several types of analyses to evaluate office costs but none of the analyses were performed in great detail. And, six (26%) of the executives indicated their firms had not examined the cost of support systems except in a cursory manner. Thus 21 of the 23 executives in the five firms described their analysis of office costs as being substantially less than detailed or thorough.

TABLE 2. RESPONSES BY TOP MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATIVES RELATING TO IMPORTANCE AND CONTROL OF OFFICE COSTS

Question: To what extent has your firm examined office costs to determine whether the costs are within an acceptable range?

Responses

Company	Rather Thoroughly	To Some Extent	Minimally	Total
A	1	3		4
B	1	2	2	5
C		4		4
D		1	3	4
E		5	1	6
Composite	2	15	6	23

The types of analyses performed in the companies as mentioned by their executives ranged from formal measurement of office productivity to departmental, budgetary and industry cost comparisons. Company A, the only firm in which a formal work measurement program had been developed, did not have completely current

standards in use although company representatives reported that it was planned to update the standards.

In general, it could be concluded that office costs were not perceived by the executives as being an area of critical concern and that their firms had not examined thoroughly the reasonableness of present office costs. On the other hand, the executives indicated, as shown in Table 3, that their firms should set as a medium to high priority the goal of considering ways to reduce office costs. As can be seen in Table 3, 18 of the 23 executives (78%) rated on a seven-point scale (7 representing very high importance) the need to reduce costs as a "5" or higher. Executives in Company E indicated they did not see the need for reducing office costs as being important at the present time although they might see the need as being more critical in the future.

TABLE 3. IMPORTANCE OF NEED TO REDUCE OFFICE COSTS AS MENTIONED BY TOP MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATIVES

Question: On a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 representing very high importance, how important is it for your firm to consider ways to reduce costs associated with office services and personnel?

Rating Scale Responses

Company	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Total
A	2	1	1					4
B			4	1				5
C	1	1	2					4
D	2	1	1					4
E			2	1	2	1		6
Composite	5	3	10	2	2	1		23

A question similar to that shown in Table 3 was asked of the managers and supervisors interviewed. Review of the data in Table 4 reveals that 13 of the 25 managers and supervisors (52%) felt it was between quite and extremely important that office costs be reduced. Thus, comparison of the data in Tables 3 and 4

seems to suggest that the top managers, in general, saw the reduction of office costs as more important than did the managers and supervisors most intimately involved with office budgets. Interestingly, all the executives in Company C (Table 3) rated office cost reduction as rather important whereas 5 of the 7 managers and supervisors interviewed in Company C (Table 4) reported office cost reduction as a rather low level consideration. Conversely, the managers and supervisors in Company E (Table 4) saw office cost reduction as rather important whereas the executives in Company E (Table 3) saw the need for office cost reduction as rather unimportant.

TABLE 4. IMPORTANCE OF NEED TO REDUCE OFFICE COSTS AS MENTIONED BY MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS.

Question: How important is it that either you personally or the firm in general attempt to reduce unit costs of office services and personnel?

	Frequency of Mention in Company					
	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Extremely Important		1	1	1		3
Very or Quite Important	3	5	1	1		10
Moderately Important	2			1	3	6
Other Areas More Important			2			2
Not Important	1		3			4
Composite	6	6	7	3	3	25

In summary, it would appear that concern about office costs is not of universally high importance as seen by the executives, managers, and supervisors interviewed. In addition, communications between management levels regarding office cost control appear unclear at best. However, as shown by data in the following section, it would seem that several of the firms could benefit rather substantially by recognizing both the scope of office costs and the opportunities for cost reduction in the management support systems area.

Office Employee Productivity

Relating rather closely to the extent of emphasis attributed to office cost reduction is the question of office employee productivity. Several questions were asked of all employees interviewed about productivity and appeals to achieve productivity. Specifically, both the executive and manager-supervisor groups interviewed were asked what they believed to be the average productivity rate of office employees.

Productivity is operationally defined here as being the per cent of time during the working day that the employee spends performing job required activities. Productivity, as used here, does not refer to the meeting of formal standards such as might be present in a firm having a formal work measurement program and set standards for each employee. It should be remembered that Company A was the only one of the five companies in the study that used a form of formal work measurement even though the standards used in Company A had not been updated and adjusted to reflect changes in procedures and work loads.

The top managers in each company estimated the average productivity of office employees in their firms. Table 5 summarizes the estimates of the top managers and the data reflect quite substantial differences generally, and specifically in Companies C and D.

TABLE 5. TOP MANAGEMENT ESTIMATES OF OFFICE EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY

Question: As an average, what percent productivity is realized from office employees?

	Percent of Productivity							
Company	90	85	80	75	70	60	Uncertain	Total
A				1	3			4
B			2		1		2	5
C	1		1		1		1	4
D		1	2		1			4
E					2	3	1	6
Composite	1	1	5	1	8	3	4	23

Eight of the 23 top managers (35%) estimated office employee productivity to be approximately 70 per cent and another three believed it to be about 60 per cent. Thus, nearly one half of the executives interviewed believed office employees in their firms were productively engaged not more than 70 per cent of the time they were on the job. The data in Table 5 tend to explain why the executives attributed such importance to the need to reduce office costs as revealed by data shown in Table 3 earlier.

Pursuing the matter of office employee productivity, the managers and supervisors working directly with office personnel were also asked questions about the productivity of office employees. As might be expected, the managers and supervisors tended to rate office employee productivity higher, in general, than did the top managers. For example, the data in Table 6 show that 16 (64%) of the 25 managers and supervisors believed office employees were productively involved 75 per cent or more of the working day.

TABLE 6. PRODUCTIVITY ESTIMATES OF OFFICE EMPLOYEES MADE BY MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS

Question: What do you estimate the productivity level (per cent of time during day working productively) of your subordinates to be?

Per Cent of Time Working Productively

Company	Unknown	100	90-95	85	80	75	70	65	60	Total
A		1	2		1		1		1	6
B	2					3		1		6
C			3		1	1		2		7
D	1					1		1		3
E			1	1	1					3
Composite	3	1	6	1	3	5	1	4	1	25

On the other hand, only 6 (24%) managers and supervisors reported office employees to be productively occupied less than 75 per cent of the work day compared to the 11 executives (48%) who believed the productivity rate to be less than 75 per cent.

The reasons for discrepancies between various management levels regarding office employee productivity are not vivid. There may be some element of defensiveness influencing estimates made by the managers and supervisors. Or, top managers may not be close enough to actual operations to understand clearly the exact activities in progress and therefore be skeptical of claims of departmental efficiency. Whatever the reason(s), it appears evident that considerable misunderstanding exists in the companies participating in the study regarding productivity of support personnel.

Furthermore, a question could be raised in terms of how accurate the productivity estimates are and what performance data are available to substantiate the estimates made. Based upon national reports of office employee productivity made by experts from consulting agencies, the estimates (on the average) reported in Tables 5 and 6 appear to be between 15 and 20 per cent higher than typical office employee productivity rates in firms not having formal work measurement programs. Thus, there may be a very real opportunity to improve efficiency through more thorough examination of office employee activities and through the establishment of more precise goals and standards. Comments in the next section will deal more comprehensively with the area of employee performance appraisal procedures and needs.

Another facet of support personnel productivity was revealed when the managers and supervisors were asked what level of productivity they desired. Responses to the above inquiry are shown in Table 7. Notice that 14 of the 25 managers and supervisors (56%) desired a level of productivity of 85 per cent or higher whereas (as shown in Table 6) only 32 per cent (8) of the managers and supervisors estimated current productivity to be 85 per cent or higher. None of the managers and supervisors responding to the question with exact figures reported they would be satisfied with a level of productivity less than 70 per cent.

TABLE 7. OFFICE EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY LEVELS DESIRED BY MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS

Question: What do you believe to be a satisfactory level of productivity for office employees?

Per Cent of Time Working Productively

Company	Unknown	100	90-95	85	80	75	70	Total
A		2	2	1	1			6
B	2	1		1	1	1		6
C	2	1	2	2				7
D	1					1	1	3
E			2				1	3
Composite	5	4	6	4	2	2	2	25

Based upon the figures in Tables 6 and 7 it could be concluded that, in general, the managers and supervisors desired higher office employee productivity than was presently being acquired. Consequently, the managers and supervisors were posed the question shown in Table 8 below.

TABLE 8. PERCEPTIONS OF MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRAINING AND PRODUCTIVITY

Question: To what extent do you believe thorough training is important to improving office employee productivity?

Frequency of Mention in Company

	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Uncertain			2		1	3
Very Important	1	3	2	1		7
Moderately Important		1	2		2	5
Possibly Helpful	4	2	1	2		9
Not Very Important	1					1
Composite	6	6	7	3	3	25

Only seven (28%) of the managers and supervisors believed that thorough training was very important as a means of improving office employee productivity. Conversely, ten (40%) felt thorough training was of questionable value in improving office employee productivity. The above figures are quite meaningful when considered

in conjunction with the nature and extent of office employee training as discussed in later sections dealing with training and development practices. In brief, it can be stated at this point that the training practices, as reported by the office employees, were somewhat less than thorough and, conceivably, if improved could result in substantially higher levels of office employee performance.

Concluding the analysis of office employee productivity were two questions asked of the 134 office employees interviewed. It was felt that executives in each firm might benefit from the views expressed by office employees relating to the matter of productivity. There seemed to be little merit, however, in asking the office employees how productive they were since such a question generally forces a biased (and likely misleading) response. Thus, the matter of productivity was approached through the question shown in Table 9. It was believed that if productivity was stressed as an important concern in the company, the office employees would reveal rather strong feelings about company incentives and programs to effect increased productivity. Interestingly, and hopefully of meaning to company executives, is the fact that 64 (48%) of the 134 office employees were unable to identify incentives they perceived as encouraging higher personal productivity.

TABLE 9. INCENTIVES MENTIONED BY 134 OFFICE EMPLOYEES RELATING TO INCREASING PERSONAL PRODUCTIVITY

Question: What incentives does this company offer to encourage you to become more efficient or productive in your job?

	Frequency of Mention in Company					
Responses	A	B	C	D	E	Total
a. Do not know of any	13	14	11	6	20	64
b. Possibility of salary increase	6	6	9	6	5	32
c. Possibility of promotion	6	6	12	2	1	27
d. Performance appraisal & feedback	6	3	3	2		14
e. Company benefits & educational opportunities		3	4	2	2	11
f. Profit Sharing Plan	6					6
g. Good relationship with superiors				1	5	6
h. Responsibility & challenge of work			2			2
i. Satisfaction from doing the work			2			2
j. High job security					1	1

The 70 office employees who did identify incentives frequently mentioned more than one item. As is evident from review of Table 9, the two most popular items mentioned were "possibility of a salary increase" and "possibility of promotion." Overall, Company C appeared to have the most visible incentives and placed the most emphasis on productivity for office employees. Likewise, Company C seemed to have the best promotional opportunities (as perceived by employees) for office personnel. It should also be noted that office employees in Company A (the one company that had a form of formal work measurement) perceived personal performance appraisal and feedback as an incentive more frequently than employees in other companies.

During the course of the interviews, it became quite clear that most of the office employees had difficulty identifying company rewards and incentives. It appeared, in fact, that few of the office employees interviewed perceived company rewards as being related in any direct way to personal performance. Rather, it seemed most office employees believed salary increases and other rewards were issued on a general rather than individual basis.

Additional evidence that office employees, in general, did not clearly see current incentives as personal rewards is reflected through the data in Table 10.

TABLE 10. INCENTIVES OFFICE EMPLOYEES BELIEVED WOULD ENCOURAGE HIGHER PRODUCTIVITY

Question: What types of incentives could the firm offer that would encourage you to become more efficient or productive?

	Frequency of Mention in Company					
	A	B	C	D	E	Total
a. Merit raises based upon individual productivity	14	9	5	7	5	40
b. Improved promotional opportunities		9	5	3	14	31
c. Improved superior-subordinate communications and personal feedback (more recognition)	9	2	2	3	8	24
d. Upgrade jobs			6	2	9	17
e. Bonuses		5			5	10
f. More educational offerings		5				5
g. Rewards for good attendance			5			5
h. Better communications between different departments and employee levels					5	5
i. Clearer work standards and goals			3	1		4
j. Higher salaries	3					3
k. Make jobs more meaningful				1		1

The item most frequently mentioned as an effective incentive encouraging them to increase productivity and efficiency was a salary increase based upon individual performance. Likewise, 31 (23%) of the office employees believed better promotional opportunities would be an important incentive to improve efficiency and productivity. Again, many of the support personnel interviewed had difficulty naming desired incentives but a strong feeling was expressed that incentives were needed and that incentives should be oriented more toward individual performance rather than toward company-wide achievements.

The matter of communications and need for improvement of same was mentioned in several ways. For example, items c, h and i in Table 10 all relate to aspects of corporate communications and seem to suggest that many office employees feel a lack of direction and involvement in such matters as company affairs, recognition of their achievements, and personal job goals. Consequently, it would appear that firms could profitably devote greater attention to such incentives and motivational thrusts as improved communications, more explicit goal and work standard statements, improved performance appraisal and salary increases based upon individual performance, and increased promotional opportunities for office personnel.

Summary

Relating to the matter of office employee productivity are several factors emerging from the interviews with employees at various company levels. Enumeration of major factors would include:

1. Estimates by executives, managers and supervisors of office employee productivity are quite diverse and suggest that limited attention has been devoted to the issue of either individual employee performance or performance of support personnel in general.

2. Top management members were generally less optimistic of office employee efficiency than were the managers and supervisors in each firm.
3. Managers and supervisors generally desired a higher level of productivity on the part of office employees than was presently being achieved.
4. More than one half of the managers and supervisors interviewed were doubtful that thorough training programs were important efforts in improving office employee productivity.
5. Nearly one-half (48%) of the 134 office employees interviewed were not able to identify incentives or rewards offered by their respective companies that encouraged them to achieve higher levels of productivity and efficiency.
6. Of the incentives currently offered within their companies, those most frequently mentioned by office employees were salary increases, promotion possibilities, performance appraisals, and company benefits.
7. Company incentives were not clearly understood by office employees although preference by office employees for increased incentives was rather strong.
8. Incentives most desired by office employees are salary increases based upon individual merit, improved promotional opportunities, improved communications and feedback, and more recognition.

Thus, the area of support personnel productivity appears to be one that is not clearly understood but one which offers substantial opportunity for analysis, discussion and possible improvement--both from the management and office personnel points of view.

Office Employee Performance Appraisal

Relating rather impressively to selection, training, and productivity of support personnel is the activity commonly called performance appraisal or performance evaluation. In order to understand more fully possible training needs and support system efficiencies, questions were posed to those individuals interviewed relating to procedures and practices resulting in reports of office employee performance.

Management Reports of Office Employee Appraisal Procedures

Two very similar questions were asked of the top management members in each firm about the methods and procedures used to determine office employee productivity and performance. First, each executive was asked how individual office employee productivity was determined in his firm. Responses were categorized as shown in Table 11.

TABLE 11. TOP MANAGEMENT REPORTS OF PRODUCTIVITY ASSESSMENT METHODS

Question: How is individual office employee productivity determined?

	Frequency of Mention in Company					
Method	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Formal Work Measurement	4					4
Individual Performance Standards		2				2
Criteria Set by Superior		3	3	3	5	14
Compared to Performance of Past Employees			1	1	1	3
Composite	4	5	4	4	6	23

As indicated earlier, Company A used formal work measurement and the executives in Company A all reported employee productivity was determined through the formal program. In the other four companies, however, the data in Table 11 would suggest that determining office employee productivity was the responsibility and concern

of the immediate superiors and that top management in four of the five companies did not believe office employee productivity to be a major concern.

The second question asked of the executives focused more directly on approaches used in their company to evaluate the overall performance of office employees. The responses to the question shown in Table 12 conflict somewhat with data displayed in Table 11. Specifically, executives in Company A reported that formal work measurement was used to determine office employee productivity but, as shown in Table 12, indicated that performance appraisal was rather subjective or informal. Thus, it would appear that formal records of employee production were kept but that review of employee performance was not equally objective and formal. Overall, 14 (60%) of the 23 executives felt performance appraisal was rather subjective and the direct responsibility of the immediate supervisor.

TABLE 12. TOP MANAGEMENT REPORTS OF PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL APPROACHES

Question: What types of performance appraisal or evaluation are used for office personnel?

	Frequency of Mention in Company					
Approach	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Subjective (Informal) by Immediate Supervisor	4	2	1	3	4	14
Formal Performance Standards Set and Discussed with Employees		3				3
Continuing Review but Left to Immediate Supervisor			1			1
Unknown			2			2
Complete Evaluation Form				1	2	3
Composite	4	5	4	4	6	23

In only one of the five companies was it reported that formal performance standards were developed for each office employee and that the standards (objectives) were used in appraisal of each employee's performance. Even so, there was not complete agreement in Company B by the executives reporting.

Since employee performance is generally the direct responsibility of immediate superiors, the managers and supervisors were asked how they measured the performance of office employees. Their responses are shown in Table 13.

TABLE 13. MANAGER-SUPERVISOR REPORTS OF OFFICE EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

Question: How do you measure the productivity and merit of your subordinates?

	Frequency of Mention in Company					
Method	A	B	C	D	E	Total*
Formal Work Measurement	5					5
Mostly Non-Quantitative--Meet Individual Supervisor Deadlines	1	1	6	2	2	12
Individual Goals for Employees		3				3
Left to Supervisor		1				1
Keep Detailed Records		1	1			2
Historical Records			1	1	2	4

*More than one method mentioned by some of the 25 respondents.

Generally, the reports of managers and supervisors agreed quite closely with those of top management. Again, the most frequently mentioned approach was non-quantitative suggesting once more that office employee performance is not examined very closely and in many cases is appraised through rather subjective approaches and criteria.

Following up comments by managers and supervisors regarding the methods they used for office employee performance appraisal was a question asking them to delineate specifically the factors they used as criteria in appraisal. Table 14 lists those factors and criteria most frequently mentioned. Of the eleven items frequently mentioned, six appear to relate rather directly to quantitative job performance--numbers 2, 4, 6, 7, 10 and 11. The other five seem to focus more on attitudes, personality, regularity and other items related in a less direct fashion to production ability. In addition, nearly all of the items mentioned, with the

exclusion of number 4, would tend to be more subjectively than objectively assessed. The element of subjectivity was mentioned frequently as a point of irritation to office employees as discussed in the following sections.

TABLE 14. FACTORS MENTIONED BY MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS USED IN PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

Question: What are the most important factors for office employees to be successful in your department?

Factors	Frequency of Mention in Company					
	A	B	C	D	E	Total*
1. Ability to Get Along	2	3	2	2		9
2. Take Initiative	1	1	4	1	1	8
3. Good Attendance--Punctuality	2	1	4	1		8
4. Efficiency--Productivity	3	1	1		2	7
5. Interest in Work & Working	1	3	1	1	1	7
6. Have Basic Skills	1	2	3	1		7
7. Follow Instructions	1	2	1	1	1	6
8. Conscientious--Honesty	2	1	2			5
9. Good Attitude			3	2		5
10. Ability to Communicate	1		2			3
11. Ability to Make Decisions	1			1		2

*More than one factor mentioned by some of the 25 respondents

In summary, then, the executives, managers and supervisors generally reported that office employee performance appraisal was more subjectively than objectively based, was delegated to individual supervisors and, for the most part, was not considered an item of high concern.

Office Employee Reports About Performance Appraisal Procedures

Although the managers and supervisors of office employees did not seem to view employee performance appraisal as an area of major concern, they conveyed the impression that practices they currently employed were quite satisfactory. Thus, the 134 office employees were asked several questions relating to their performance appraisal--the factors emphasized, their understanding of the factors, fairness of the process, etc.

First, each office employee was asked what factors were stressed by his/her superior as being important for him to be successful in his work. A number of rather general items (efficiency, attitude, attendance, quality, quantity, etc.) were mentioned. After employees mentioned various items, they were asked to provide specific examples of the standards or factors. For example, what specific amount of work must be completed? Questioning each employee about the specifics suggested that most of the employees lacked a clear understanding of specific factors and standards used in their performance appraisals.

TABLE 15. OFFICE EMPLOYEE UNDERSTANDING OF FACTORS STRESSED IN THEIR PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

	Frequency of Occurrence in Company					
Extent of Employee Understanding	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Good understanding		10	13	4		27
Partial understanding	19				15	34
Vague understanding		20	18	10		48
Poor understanding	11				14	25
Composite	30	30	31	14	29	134

Specifically, as shown in Table 15, only 27 (20%) seemed to have a good understanding of how their performance was assessed and the specific factors that were used. Conversely, 73 (54%) of the office employees interviewed displayed either a vague or poor understanding of factors used in performance appraisal. Those employees (34) who described some factors rather specifically but were unable to define other factors were determined to have a partial understanding.

The tenor of the data in Table 15 would seem to have important implications for managers and supervisors. For example, to what extent have management and supervisory goals and objectives been delineated in specific terms for each office subordinate? Do office employees clearly understand what is important for

successful performance? Are performance appraisal factors well understood by office employees--are they specific, objective, and subject to mutually acceptable measurements? Is each office employee informed of his or her performance assessments? All of the above questions, when answered positively, would seem to relate rather impressively to high office employee performance.

As can be seen from review of the data in Table 15, however, very few of the office employees included in the study had a clear understanding of the factors important to their success. The office employees did, however, have some rather definite ideas and suggestions of factors they believed should be used in evaluating their performance. Specifically the following criteria were mentioned by the 134 office employees:

1. Amount (quantity) of work completed within a given period of time--mentioned by 81 employees.
2. Quality level of work completed--mentioned by 39 employees.
3. Ability to handle responsibility (work on own) effectively--mentioned by 36 employees.
4. Ability to deal effectively with superiors, co-workers and the public--mentioned by 35 employees.
5. Take the initiative in doing work, making arrangements, checking status, urging action, etc.--mentioned by 30 employees.
6. Being cooperative, willing to assist other departments; dependability--mentioned by 29 employees.
7. Extent of improvement by employee in work quantity, quality, company understanding, etc.--mentioned by 24 employees.
8. Employee attendance regularity--mentioned by 23 employees.
9. Communications abilities (speaking, writing, composing)--mentioned by 16 employees.

10. Ability to make effective decisions--mentioned by 16 employees.

11. Ability to plan and organize work--mentioned by 11 employees.

It should be noted that many of the office employees were unable to mention criteria or factors in addition to those mentioned by their supervisors. Also, it was probably the first time that many of the office employees had been asked to consider identifying factors to be used in evaluating their own performance--an activity of obvious difficulty for many of those who participated in the study. Likewise, the factors that were mentioned (listed above) are not as specific as they might be. In general, however, the office employees believed the goals, criteria and standards used in performance appraisal should be more clearly explained and communicated. It seemed to be the overall sentiment that they desired more specific measures of their performance as well as considerably greater feedback about their performance on a regular basis. Many seemed to feel that the subjectivity of present appraisal procedures resulted in unfair and inequitable evaluations and salary increases.

An additional aspect of performance appraisal was pursued with all of the office employees when they were asked how fairly they believed their performance was evaluated and whether they felt their salaries were fair compared to the salaries of other employees in the company. Table 16 shows responses of the office employees to the first question above. Of the 134 office employees interviewed, 80 (60%) believed their performance was evaluated either very fairly or fairly whereas only 28 (20%) of the employees voiced the opinion that their performance appraisals were not fair.

TABLE 16. OFFICE EMPLOYEE FEELINGS ABOUT FAIRNESS OF THEIR PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

Question: How fairly is your job performance evaluated?

	Responses			
Company	Very Fair	Fair	Unfair	Uncertain
A	8	14	8	
B	9	12	9	
C	9	13	4	5
D	1	4	3	6
E	4	6	4	15
Totals	31	49	28	26

The responses to the question in Table 16 are encouraging to the extent that more than one-half of the employees seemed satisfied with the fairness of their evaluations. However, the employees' responses to earlier questions and to the question in the following table suggest they did not clearly understand how they were evaluated and would, in fact, prefer more explicit information about their performance.

Even though most of the office employees felt their performance appraisal was fair, only 44 (33%) believed their salaries were fair when compared to salaries (actual or perceived) of other employees (both office and non-office) in the company. As the data in Table 17 show, 53 (40%) employees felt their salaries were unfair in terms of what they did and 37 employees indicated they were not aware of other employees' salaries and could not respond positively or negatively to the question.

TABLE 17. OFFICE EMPLOYEES' ASSESSMENTS OF SALARY FAIRNESS

Question: Is your salary fair compared to the salaries of other employees in the company?

	Responses		
Company	Yes	No	Uncertain
A	5	14	11
B	9	9	12
C	15	12	4
D	10	3	1
E	5	15	9
Totals	44	53	37

Review of the data contained in Tables 16, 17 and 18 seems to suggest that office employees, in general, do not have a clear understanding of the performance appraisal techniques and factors used by their superiors, and have rather serious reservations about the fairness of their salaries as compared to the salaries of other company employees.

Summary

The major findings in this section of the report relating to office employee performance appraisal could be enumerated as follows:

1. Top management members generally did not get involved in setting company-wide standards and practices for the assessment of office employee performance. Office employee appraisal was reported to be the responsibility of the immediate supervisors and superiors and was judged to be more informal and subjective than formal and objective.
2. Managers and supervisors tended, primarily, to perceive office employee appraisal as less than an important concern and employed mostly informal and non-quantitative criteria in measurements. Many of the criteria used in assessment focused more upon personal qualities and attitudes than upon performance quality and quantity.
3. The office employees, generally, expressed a partial or poor understanding of the criteria used to assess their performance and, for the most part, expressed a desire for more explicit statements and directives relating to their performance as well as preferring more objective measures of performance.

4. More than one-half of the office employees believed their performance was evaluated fairly. Conversely, 40 per cent of the employees felt their salaries were not equitable.

In brief, it would seem that some supervisors and managers did an excellent job of evaluating office employee performance but that considerable opportunity for improvement--and a possible increase in productivity--exists in the area of office employee performance appraisal.

Office Employee Training

The major thrust of the study was to determine and analyze the nature and extent of training and development activities for office employees. It was believed that attitudes of executives, managers and supervisors relating to office costs, office employee productivity and assessment of office employees were important factors possibly influencing the amount of attention accorded to training and development of management support personnel. Consequently, the earlier sections of the report focused upon office cost-productivity aspects. This section examines the nature and extent of training programs provided for newly employed and experienced office personnel.

Top Management, Management and Supervisory Reports of Training

A multitude of procedures, policies, practices and personnel must be learned by any newly hired office employee. The extent to which the new employee learns to perform activities properly and develops good work habits may depend rather impressively upon the nature and extent of his or her initial training--who does the training, how thorough the training is, how accurately the new employee is trained, and the general impression of the firm acquired during the initial employment period. Consequently, it is believed that training of new office employees could be one of the critical components leading to or detracting from high productivity, job understanding, job satisfaction and possible long tenure.

Each of the 23 top management representatives was asked to describe the types of training provided for new office employees in his firm. The executive's responses are shown in Table 18.

TABLE 18. TOP MANAGEMENT REPORTS OF TRAINING FOR NEW OFFICE PERSONNEL

Question: What types of training are provided by your firm for newly employed office personnel?

	Frequency of Mention in Company					
	A	B	C	D	E	Total
OJT by Supervisor and Employees	3	2	2	1	3	11
OJT by Employees	1	3		1	3	8
Orientation	1	1	1	1	1	5
OJT by Supervisor			2	1		3
Skill Classes	1					1
Self-Instructional					1	1
Formal Courses		1				1
Composite	6	7	5	4	8	30*

*More than one means mentioned by seven of the 23 respondents.

The top managers believed that most employees in the office received on-the-job training either by other skilled employees or by both employees and supervisors--mentioned by 19 of the 23 interviewees. Only three executives felt that supervisors provided most of the training. Additionally five executives mentioned that a form of orientation to the company was provided.

Based upon the data in Table 18 it would appear that top managers believe peer employees to be acceptable trainers of new office employees. It would seem, however, if peers are to act as trainers, that serious consideration should be given to:

1. Training skilled employees how to train.
2. Selecting only those skilled employees who desire to train, practice acceptable job procedures, and have ability to serve as trainers.
3. Provide sufficient time for the skilled employees to perform their training function without delaying their own work.
4. Provide frequent and careful follow-up of training progress by the supervisor.

5. Develop standard office procedures and practices.

If new employees are trained by other skilled employees who lack the desire, ability or time to train them, it is quite possible training will be of a quite low level and the new employee will experience both frustration and low performance. Additionally, unless careful consideration is given to the training content, new employees may be taught inefficient methods and practices and incorrect company policies. Finally, it seems critical that the skilled employee selected to train the new employee be desirous of and have sufficient incentive to train the new worker if training is to be successful.

The predominant use of skilled employees as trainers of new office employees was also mentioned by the managers and supervisors. Table 19 includes data revealing the major means of training to be the use of skilled employees to provide OJT.

TABLE 19. MANAGER-SUPERVISOR REPORTS OF TRAINING FOR NEW OFFICE EMPLOYEES

Question: How are newly employed office personnel trained by your firm?

	Frequency of Mention in Company					
	A	B	C	D	E	Total
OJT by Other Skilled Employees	5	4	3	2	2	16
OJT by the Supervisor	1	1	3		1	6
Self-instructional Materials		1	1			2
OJT by Both Supervisor and Other Employees				1		1
Composite	6	6	7	3	3	25

Only limited mention was made by either the executives or managers of self-instructional programs and formal courses and classes for training new office employees. In review, it would seem that training of office employees--as reported by the executives, managers, and supervisors interviewed in this study--is not perceived as a particularly important consideration. Or, it may be believed that skilled office employees are performing acceptably as trainers. How the

office employees perceived their initial training was determined through several questions as described in the following section.

Office Employee Reports of Training

Each of the 134 office employees was asked how he or she was trained by the company upon initial employment. Responses, as shown in Table 20 show that 83 (62%) said they were trained by other employees--either employees at other work stations or by the employee whose position they were filling.

TABLE 20. OFFICE EMPLOYEE REPORTS OF INITIAL TRAINING

Question: How were you trained by the company upon initial employment?

	Frequency of Mention in Company					
	A	B	C	D	E	Total
By Other Employees	19	15	13	4	14	65
Supervisor	6	2	11	1	4	24
By Employee Vacating Position	4	5	2	7		18
Learned by Self (No Training)	1	4	1	2	8	16
Some Formal Instruction		4	4		2	10
Self-instructional Programs		2			1	3
Composite	30	32	31	14	29	136*

*Two employees reported more than one type of training.

Interestingly, 24 (18%) said they were trained by their immediate superior and 16 indicated there was no training--they learned their jobs through trial and error. Only 10 of the 134 employees reported formal instruction relating to their jobs.

The initial training received by office employees was, almost exclusively, informal in nature and provided on the job through verbal instruction and demonstration. Very few of the office employees interviewed could remember using job procedural manuals or other written materials when learning their positions.

Since initial job training frequently covers only a limited portion of total job responsibilities, each office employee was asked what additional training they had received after being on the job for a period of time. Table 21 shows that 58 (43%) employees had additional on-the-job training dealing with various job aspects. Conversely, 41 (30%) reported they had received no additional training since initial training.

TABLE 21. TRAINING RECEIVED BY OFFICE EMPLOYEES AFTER INITIAL EMPLOYMENT TRAINING

Question: What training have you received since initial employment?

	Frequency of Mention in Company					
Responses	A	B	C	D	E	Total
OJT related to procedures, etc.	13	9	16	8	12	58
None	7	11	9	3	11	41
Classes and formal training	12		6		6	24
Job-related courses		8				8
Self-instructional courses		2				2
College or company sponsored courses		4				4
Cross training (on other jobs)		1				1
Machine operation				3		3
Composite	32	35	31	14	29	141*

*More than one method mentioned by seven employees.

A few of the employees had taken formal courses--either related to their jobs or of a general nature--and only one reported having been trained on a related job (cross-training). As a result, it seems that most of the employees interviewed had received little or no training by their companies after accepting employment and initial training. However, the office employees did have some definite suggestions about the types of programs and activities they felt would be beneficial.

Many of the office employees believed there should be additional training and development programs and opportunities. Their ideas suggest a definite need or weakness that they believed should be alleviated in order to perform more effectively in their positions. Specifically, note that the suggestions shown

in Table 22 relate, in the main, to programs and activities that would explain more fully company operations, practices, policies, procedures, positions and their relationship or relevance to specific positions and responsibilities.

TABLE 22. OFFICE EMPLOYEE SUGGESTIONS FOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Question: What types of training and development programs do you believe would be beneficial to newly employed and more experienced office employees?

	Frequency of Mention in Company					
	A	B	C	D	E	Total
a. Programs providing additional information about other departments and how their functions relate to my work	9	14	16	7	20	66
b. More training to explain procedures and technical job aspects	7	12	10	4		33
c. More use and development of procedures manuals			4	6	6	16
d. More thorough training upon initial employment				7	7	14
e. Formal program to explain other jobs and company functions and policies			6		7	13
f. Opportunities to prepare for supervisory and management positions or other promotions	5				7	12
g. More cross-training on other jobs	5				3	8
h. More and better machine training	5					5
i. Program to improve training of trainers			4			4
j. Courses in letter writing and English usage		3				3
k. Programs dealing with public relations		2				2

There appeared to be a feeling on the part of many of the office employees that they were asked to perform tasks and activities without possessing or being provided with sufficient peripheral data and understanding to act effectively. In general, they believed office employees need much more information about departmental functions and activities in addition to their own, more exact procedural and policy training, and more development and use of procedures manuals. Training and development of these types were mentioned by 128 of the 134 office employees.

In addition, although only 12 of the 134 employees explicitly mentioned it, there was some desire for developmental programs that could permit selected office employees to prepare for supervisory and management responsibilities. As will be seen in a later section focusing upon office employee ability utilization, a substantial number of the employees were interested in greater promotion and advancement opportunities than were presently available. However, it does not appear that a substantial portion of the employees interviewed were explicitly interested in promotions that might include supervisory or management responsibilities.

Summary

1. Top management, managers and supervisors seemed to be in agreement that on-the-job training by either supervisors, other employees or a combination thereof was the predominant method used to train newly employed office personnel.
2. Of the 134 office employees, 107 (80%) reported they had OJT provided by other employees or a supervisor.
3. Nearly all of the on-the-job training received by office employees was very informal in nature and provided through verbal instruction and demonstration.

4. Less than one-half of the 134 office employees had received additional OJT after initial training. Thirty per cent of the office employees had received no additional training after initial training.
5. The office employees suggested several types of training and development programs they believed would be effective. In general, they were interested in programs that would provide more information about policies, procedures, and functions in the company both within their department and other departments.

Office Employee Utilization and Development

Training and development efforts with personnel may yield few returns in increased efficiency or effectiveness if supervisors and managers of employees are not effective in utilizing skills and abilities possessed by their subordinates. Recognizing the numerous potential moral problems associated with underutilization of employee abilities, it was decided to examine, in this study, the ways in which managers and supervisors were prepared to utilize abilities of office personnel.

Before undertaking the study, it was postulated by the investigator that few male supervisors and managers of office personnel had a clear understanding of the skills possessed by office employees. Likewise, the investigator was interested in learning how managers and supervisors of office employees learned to utilize the abilities of their subordinates. The premise held by the investigator was that managers and supervisors who had not performed the work done by their office employee subordinates would have difficulty in such management activities as: (1) differentiating between various levels of performance; (2) training subordinates; (3) recognizing abilities possessed by subordinates; (4) utilizing support personnel effectively; and, (5) identifying office employees who desired substantially greater challenge and responsibility.

If the managers and supervisors of office employees were not thoroughly familiar with the skills and abilities possessed and used by their subordinates it seemed likely that office efficiency could suffer, that training needs could go unrecognized, and that employee abilities could be underutilized. In brief, it seems to the investigator that the management of support personnel and their production was one of the very few areas within business where skilled employees were selected, trained and supervised by persons frequently <u>not</u> having skills, experiences and abilities similar to those of their subordinates. Consequently, a number of questions were asked each of the three employee groups interviewed relating to the matter of office employee utilization and development.

Utilization by Superiors of Support Personnel

The top management representatives were queried about the ways in which they, other managers, and supervisors learned to utilize the abilities of female support personnel. Table 23 shows the responses of the top managers to the above question and reveals that 21 (91%) of the 23 executives believed managers and supervisors acquired skill in this area through their own experiences (trial and error).

TABLE 23. TOP MANAGEMENT REPORTS DESCRIBING PREPARATION OF MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS TO UTILIZE SUPPORT PERSONNEL

Question: Within your firm, how are managers and supervisors trained to utilize the abilities of female support personnel?

	Responses			
Company	Formal Training	Semi-Formal	Learn by Self	Total
A		1	3	4
B		1	4	5
C			4	4
D			4	4
E			6	6
Composite	0	2	21	23

Conceivably, concern could be raised about the practice of permitting managers and supervisors to approach their responsibilities with little or no formal training relating to a potentially major managerial problem--utilization of subordinate abilities. As a result, the executives were asked the question shown in Table 24 below.

TABLE 24. VALUE OF TRAINING MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS AS PERCEIVED BY TOP MANAGEMENT

Question: Would there be value in a program to train managers and supervisors to utilize more effectively office personnel?

Responses

Company	Definitely	Possibly	Doubtful	Total
A	2	1	1	4
B	4	1		5
C	1	2	1	4
D	1	3		4
E	3	3		6
Composite	11	10	2	23

Nearly one-half of the executives believed there would be definite value in a program that would train managers and supervisors how to utilize office personnel more effectively. Only two of the 23 executives conveyed the idea they had serious doubts regarding the value of such a program. Thus, it appears that many of the executives see potential weaknesses in current practices relating to preparation of superiors of office personnel.

The managers and supervisors were likewise asked two questions about how effective they and their peers were in utilizing the abilities of office personnel. One question (Table 25) dealt specifically with the issue of ability utilization whereas the second question (Table 26) was somewhat of a "backdoor" approach to determine supervisory abilities. As can be seen by reviewing the data in Table 25, it was believed by only 8 of the 25 managers and supervisors that others within their firms were effective or very effective in utilizing office employee abilities. Conversely, 11 of the 25 believed others were either not very effective or only partly effective in employee ability utilization.

TABLE 25. MANAGER-SUPERVISOR ESTIMATES OF OFFICE EMPLOYEE ABILITY UTILIZATION

Question: To what extent do you believe managers in this firm utilize effectively the abilities of office personnel?

Frequency of Mention in Company

	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Very effective	2				1	3
Effective		2	3			5
Partly effective	1	1	1	1		4
Varied considerably			2		2	4
Not very effective	2	2	1	2		7
Uncertain	1	1				2
Composite	6	6	7	3	3	25

It seems that most of the managers and supervisors interviewed believed there was considerable opportunity for improvement in terms of utilizing office employee abilities. If, in fact, superiors of office personnel are not very effective in utilizing their subordinates' abilities, training and development programs may have little impact upon present office employee efficiency. Thus, it may be quite important to train the superiors of office personnel concurrent with the training and development of support personnel. Otherwise, managers and supervisors will be unlikely to employ effectively the skills and abilities of office employees.

Associated with employee ability utilization is a question of to what extent manager-supervisors can perform the work done by their subordinates. It was believed supervision would be complicated if superiors were unable to do the work of the subordinates since employee productivity assessment would be more difficult to perform, method-procedure efficiency could be unknown, and training and assistance would, of necessity, be the responsibility of other employees rather than the supervisor. Thus, the question in Table 26 was asked each of the managers and supervisors.

TABLE 26. ABILITY TO PERFORM SUBORDINATES' WORK

Question: To what extent can you and other supervisors and managers of office personnel perform the work of your subordinates?

Frequency of Mention in Company

	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Could do all of it	2	2	3		1	8
Could do most of it	4	2	2	1	1	10
Could do none of it		2	2	2	1	7
Composite	6	6	7	3	3	25

Eight of the 25 managers and supervisors believed they and their peers could do all of the work performed by their subordinates. However, seven reported they or others could do none of the work performed by office employees. Therefore, how effectively can a person train and supervise others if that person is able to do only a limited portion of the subordinate's work. Some may argue that managers and supervisors need not be able to perform to be effective in their roles. Yet, it is general business practice (marketing, production, finance) to appoint supervisors and managers in terms of both management expertise or potential and performance ability. However, general business practice does not seem to be followed in the supervision of office personnel. Granted, managers having secretaries would not, in all likelihood, be expected to have the skills of the secretary. However, supervisors and managers of clerical office employee units should, in this investigator's opinion, be very familiar with (if not skilled in performing) the work done by their subordinates in order to supervise effectively.

Elaborating upon the extent to which managers and supervisors are able to perform the work of their office employee subordinates is the question shown in Table 27. Since the managers and supervisors reported they could do most or all of the work of their subordinates (reported by 18 of the 25) it seemed important to ask the office employees how they perceived the job performance skills of their

superiors. The data in Table 27 seem to match rather closely the comments of the managers and supervisors in that 48 (36%) of the office employees believed their superiors to be either very qualified or qualified to do their work. Conversely, 86 (64%) of the office employees reported their superiors to be either partially qualified or not qualified.

TABLE 27. OFFICE EMPLOYEES' ESTIMATES OF SUPERIORS' WORK ABILITIES

Question: How qualified is your supervisor or superior in terms of performing the work you do?

Company	Responses: Very Qualified	Qualified	Partially Qualified	Not Qualified
A	8	7	9	6
B	13	3	11	3
C	4	7	11	9
D	1		10	3
E	1	4	16	8
Composite	27	21	57	29

Elaborating upon the office employee reports, it should be noted that nearly all of the employees when responding to the question stated they did not believe their superiors could perform at as high a level as they (the office employees) did. Thus, those employees who believed their superiors could do the work qualified their assertions and, in some cases, suggested they believed their superiors should have greater skills in order to appreciate more fully the responsibilities of and demands made upon office employees.

The findings reported in the next section will explore more fully the training and development needs and desires of office employees and the extent to which office employees believe their abilities are being utilized.

Office Employee Training and Development Needs

The major thrust of the study examines training and development activities and programs for support personnel. Interview questions to this point have examined numerous practices and beliefs relating to employee training as well as specific aspects of training. Of particular interest to supervisors and managers of office personnel are responses to a number of questions relating to office employee training needs as perceived by both managers-supervisors and office employees themselves.

Managers and supervisors of office employees were asked two questions probing their perceptions of training desired by office employees and the value of in-house training programs for support personnel. The data in Table 28 reflect responses by managers and supervisors indicating their estimates of the value of in-house training programs for office employees.

TABLE 28. VALUE OF IN-HOUSE TRAINING OF OFFICE EMPLOYEES AS SEEN BY MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS

Question: How important is it that your company provide in-house training for both newly employed and experienced office personnel? (25 respondents)

Responses

Company	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Uncertain	Total
A	3		2	1	6
B	4	1	1		6
C	3	3	1		7
D		2	1		3
E	2		1		3
Composite	12	6	6	1	25

Review of the data in Table 28 shows that 18 of the 25 manager-supervisors believed in-house training was either somewhat or very important suggesting that greater attention should, possibly, be accorded such activity than was presently being done. On the other hand, however, 6 (24%) of the respondents did not believe

in-house training was important--reflecting once again the somewhat nonchalant interest in office efficiency and productivity held by some managers.

The managers and supervisors were also asked whether they believed office employees, as a whole, desired additional training and development opportunities. As can be seen by examining Table 29, only 4 of the 25 believed office employees had a definite desire or preference for additional training. Contrarily, 9 (36%) managers and supervisors believed office employees, in general, were probably not desirous of additional training or development.

TABLE 29. MANAGER-SUPERVISOR ESTIMATES OF OFFICE EMPLOYEE DESIRE FOR TRAINING

Question: Do you feel that office employees in general desire additional training and development either upon initial employment or after being on the job for a period of time? (25 respondents)

Responses

Company	Definitely	Possibly	Probably Not	Total
A			6	6
B	1	5		6
C	1	4	2	7
D	1	2		3
E	1	1	1	3
Composite	4	12	9	25

In comparing the responses in Tables 28 and 29 it would seem that managers and supervisors generally believed more training was desirable for office employees but that they believed office employees, for the most part, were not particularly interested in such opportunities. Thus, to determine whether the managers and supervisors held an accurate assessment of office employee goals and desires relating to training, the office employees were asked the question shown in Table 30

TABLE 30. OFFICE EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION WITH ABILITY UTILIZATION AND WORK CHALLENGE

Question: Are you satisfied with the extent to which your abilities are being utilized; do you desire additional challenge and responsibility in your work?

	Frequency of Mention in Company					
	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Abilities are sufficiently utilized; am pretty well challenged	14	14	9	5	3	45
Abilities are poorly utilized; desire substantially more challenge and responsibility	10	10	6	2	16	44
Abilities are very well utilized; do not desire more challenge	6	6	5		1	18
Abilities partially utilized; desire some more challenge			11	7	9	27
Composite	30	30	31	14	29	134

Quite different from the reported perceptions of the managers and supervisors is the fact that 71 (53%) of the office employees believed their abilities were either only partially utilized or were poorly utilized and that they desired more challenge and responsibility. Thus, it would seem the data (Table 30) support the idea that a substantial number of office employees do, in fact, desire additional developmental opportunities.

Of importance also is the range of ability utilization reported by the office employees and the fact that 18 of the employees felt quite challenged and were not desirous of additional challenge or responsibility. Likewise, 45 of the 134 office employees believed they were rather well challenged and were interested in only slightly additional responsibility or challenge. Therefore, before instituting programs of training and development for office employees it would seem imperative that management first determine which employees are desirous and interested in such activities.

As reported earlier, a majority of the office employees were interested in more challenge and responsibility. But, the managers and supervisors did not, in general, believe office employees were particularly interested in additional training and development opportunities. However, the office employees, on the whole, indicated they would be quite interested in training that might permit them to advance to a higher level position (Table 31).

TABLE 31. OFFICE EMPLOYEE INTEREST IN TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Question: Would you prefer training that might permit you to advance to a higher position either in your present department or a different department?

	Responses		
Company	Definitely	Possibly	Not Interested
A	15	9	6
B	18	6	6
C	21	6	4
D	9	2	3
E	22	4	3
Total	85	27	22

Interestingly, some of the office employees who believed they had sufficient challenge (67 of the 134) fluctuated when the question in Table 31 was asked since only 22 of the 134 indicated they definitely were not interested and 27 might possibly be interested in higher level positions. Thus, 49 of the office employees were less than enthusiastic about the prospects of additional training whereas 67 (Table 30) believed they were either pretty well or very well challenged.

Of importance, however, is the fact they 85 (63%) of the office employees were definitely interested in training and development activities that might permit them to advance. Conceivably, a substantial pool of underdeveloped resources exists within the offices of many firms if the responses shown in Tables 30 and 31 are both accurate and representative of office employees as a whole. Or, at least, there appears to be considerable opportunity to apply the concepts of job enlarge-

ment and job enrichment to the positions of office employees. However, it might be noted that application of job enrichment may well result in a desire by office employees for even greater challenge and responsibility since the employees in the company using the job enrichment concept had as great or a greater desire for more challenge and responsibility as employees in the other four companies not applying (at least formally or overtly) the job enrichment plan. In any event, managers and supervisors might well improve the efficiency and productivity of their office subordinates and themselves by identifying those employees having an interest in more training, development, challenge and responsibility.

Summary of Office Employee Utilization and Development

1. Nearly all of the top management members interviewed reported that managers and supervisors within their firms had received no formal training in terms of how to utilize effectively the skills and abilities possessed by support personnel.
2. Nearly one-half of the executives believed there would be definite value in training managers and supervisors to utilize office employees in more effective ways.
3. Similarly, 11 of the 25 managers and supervisors interviewed believed utilization of office personnel abilities was substantially less than effective.
4. Only 8 of the 25 managers and supervisors indicated they could do all of the work performed by their office employee subordinates and 64 per cent of the office employees believed their superiors to be either partially qualified or not qualified to do the work they (office employees) performed.

5. In general, managers and supervisors did not believe office employees were particularly interested in additional training and development opportunities although they tended to feel such opportunities might have value.

6. The majority of the office employees reported substantial underutilization of abilities concurring with the reports of managers and supervisors that their utilization of office employees could be improved.

7. Converse to the estimates of management, there was substantial interest shown by the office employees in opportunities leading to greater challenge, additional training, and advancement.

Overall, it seems considerable misunderstanding exists between management and office employees with respect to the interests, goals and abilities of office employees. And, conceivably, both business organizations and office employees could profit from more thorough career counseling, communication and employee ability assessment which could result in greater utilization of employee abilities, more promotions for office employees and an overall increase in productivity and office work effectiveness. Additional considerations relating to promotional opportunities for office personnel are examined in the following section of the report.

Promotional Opportunities and Awareness

Training and development programs are frequently provided with the understanding that employees having high potential will be identified and those employees will subsequently be promoted or advanced to higher level, more challenging positions. Generally, the fuller utilization of employee abilities is to the benefit of both the organization and the employee.

As discussed in earlier sections of this report, office employees in the companies studied voiced, in substantial numbers, a lack of ability utilization and a desire for additional challenge and responsibility. To further examine the opportunities for office employees to utilize more fully their abilities, a question was asked of the manager-supervisor and support personnel groups relating to promotional patterns and opportunities for office employees.

The managers and supervisors identified a number of patterns that could be followed by office employees interested in advancement. The predominant opportunity or pattern mentioned for the office employee was to advance to a higher level "office" position--mentioned by all but one of the 25 managers and supervisors. The one person who did not see opportunities for advancement within "office" positions simply did not believe promotion was a feasible consideration.

TABLE 32. MANAGER-SUPERVISOR REPORTS OF PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITY FOR OFFICE EMPLOYEES

Question: In general, what are the promotional patterns for office personnel in your company?

	Frequency of Mention in Company					
	A	B	C	D	E	Total*
Higher rank in same job	2			1		3
Supervision or management	1		1			2
Higher clerical job category	3	4	2	2	3	14
Other related but higher level office jobs	2	1	3			6
Higher level jobs in other departments		1	2			3
None		1				1
Composite	8	7	8	3	3	29

*More than one pattern suggested by four respondents.

In only two instances was it mentioned by the managers and supervisors that office employees could be advanced to supervisory or management positions. It would seem evident, therefore, that the firms studied did not, in general, look to members of the office force for supervisory or management candidates. In the investigator's opinion, however, it seems that several of the office employees interviewed would be excellent candidates--primarily for supervision but in some cases also for management--based upon their experience, desires and personal attributes. Quite possibly, management could profitably consider assessing more carefully the abilities and aspirations of office employees in their firms with an intent to advance those individuals both desirous and capable of handling supervisory and management responsibilities.

At the present time it appears that very few of the office employees interviewed in this study were aware of advancement opportunities within their organizations. From a purely theoretical point of view, concern could be expressed in terms of what impact such lack of understanding might have upon morale and performance. Specifically, considering the data in Table 33, it can be seen that 97 (72%) of the 134 office employees either did not understand their promotional opportunities or believed they had no promotional opportunities. Conversely, only 16 of the 134 employees believed they had a good chance for promotion when an opening occurred.

TABLE 33. OFFICE EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Question: How clearly do you understand your opportunities for promotion?

	Frequency of Mention in Company					
	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Not aware of promotional opportunities or do not understand opportunities	17	9	18	8	14	66
Feel there are no promotional opportunities	6	4	6	3	12	31
Feel there are limited opportunities	3	9		2	2	16
Believe there are good opportunities when openings occur	2	6	6	1	1	16
Not interested in a promotion	2	2	1			5
Composite	30	30	31	14	29	134

Also of interest in Table 33 is the fact that five office employees indicated they were not and would not be interested in a promotion. Certainly, it seems important that management attempt to identify those employees who have aspirations as well as potential for higher level positions. It should be remembered that 31 of the 134 office employees (Table 10, page 19) suggested an interest in improved promotional opportunities. Thus, contrary to the commonly voiced opinion that female office employees are not interested in career opportunities or increased responsibilities is the evidence from this study suggesting a rather firm interest in such opportunities by a reasonable number (20-25%) of the office employees.

Summarizing, there appears to be very limited opportunity for advancement of office personnel to positions of supervision or management. The primary chance to advance is within the job classification of each employee although the office employees lacked a clear understanding of even such opportunities. Further, based upon previous reports, it seems office employees are more desirous of advancement opportunities than is commonly purported by management members.

Finally, one additional area was examined in the study that could be relevant to training and development of support personnel--the area of employee selection practices and measures which is reviewed in the next and final section of the report.

Selection Practices and Measures

It was believed during the planning stages of the study that as many practices as possible relating to training and development of support personnel should be examined. Although the relationship between selection practices and measures on the one hand and training on the other may appear somewhat unrelated, it was believed that the extent to which employees were recognized as having potential for development could relate, rather impressively, to the skills and abilities that were assessed during initial employment activities. In particular, if certain skills and abilities were required upon initial employment it was then conceivable that firms would be interested in seeing those same skills developed to a high level of proficiency.

In addition, the investigator was interested in the extent to which top executives, managers and supervisors were familiar with the skills required and assessed of their office employee subordinates. Again, it was postulated that, in general, management members and supervisors would need to be quite familiar with the subordinates in order to identify training needs as well as to provide a sufficient range of job activities to challenge their subordinates. Consequently, each interviewee in each of the three levels of employees interviewed was asked a question relating to his understanding about and reaction to selection instruments and practices. At the request of management, the office employees in one firm were not queried about testing.

First, the top management members were asked what devices and standards were used to select office personnel. Table 34 shows their responses and some of the standards mentioned by the executives. Interestingly, only three of the executives indicated they did not know the selection instruments or criteria used. On the other hand, very few of the 23 executives were certain about the various skill

levels required or desired, the extent to which the tests and instruments had been validated or the extent to which the skills and abilities tested were important to successful job performance.

TABLE 34. SELECTION INSTRUMENTS USED AS REPORTED BY TOP MANAGEMENT MEMBERS

Question: What types of instruments, measures and standards are used by your firm in the selection of office personnel? (23 respondents)

Frequency of Mention in Each Company

	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Previous Experience	1	1		1		3
Typing	1	4	3	3	3	14
References	1	1			1	3
Aptitude Tests	4		3	1	3	11
Key Punch	3	1		1	1	6
Typing Speed:						
30 wpm			1			1
40 wpm	3			2		5
50 wpm	1				1	2
Shorthand	2	3	2	2	3	12
Not Certain		1	1		1	3
Personality		3			1	4
Psychological Tests		1				1
Intelligence Tests		1			2	3

Somewhat surprising to the investigator were the responses of the 25 managers and supervisors interviewed (Table 35). Of the 25, 12 indicated they really did not know what selection instruments or standards were used in selecting their office employee subordinates and that the decisions were made by people in their personnel departments. This is somewhat surprising since it seemed to the investigator that the immediate superiors of office employees would be the ones to provide job specifications and identify particular skills and abilities needed to perform successfully within their departments.

TABLE 35. SELECTION INSTRUMENTS USED AS REPORTED BY MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS

Question: What types of instruments, measures and standards are used by your firm in the selection of office personnel? (25 respondents)

	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Uncertain	2	3	5		2	12
Aptitude	2	1				3
Typing	1		1	2	1	5
Past Experience & Employment	1	2				3
Interest in Work	1					1
High School Grades	1					1
Personal Factors & Personality	2	2				4
Machine Test (Key punch, calculator)		1	1	1		3
Shorthand			1		1	2
Intelligence					1	1

Through review of Tables 34 and 35 it could be concluded that the most frequently used instruments for selection of office employees were typing tests, aptitude inventories, shorthand tests and various other machine skill tests. Some mention was made within particular firms about the use of personality and intelligence measures although not in great numbers.

Reflecting upon the data in Tables 34 and 35 suggests several concerns:

1. The speeds (skill levels) mentioned for typing seemed very low to marginal in terms of ability to perform productively on the job. Thus, an employee who typed only 40 words per minute (however measured) during the pre-employment test would more than likely be able to benefit from additional training and skill development if the job required much typing.

2. The kinds of typing and shorthand tests given (as reported by interviewees) may not be very good measures of ability to perform effectively and productively on the job. The most frequently mentioned kind of typing test was a straight-copy timed writing--an exercise substantially unlike any office job activity.

3. The rather general use of aptitude tests might be questioned in light of actual job requirements as well as the extent to which results from such tests should be considered as important or influential criteria. There appears to be considerable opportunity for improved matching of job demands to applicant qualifications and applicant ability assessment.
4. Although not used in all of the firms, serious questions could be raised regarding the validity and reliability of personality measures and inventories as meaningful tools used in the selection of office employees.

After having asked the executives, managers and supervisors about testing, the office employees in four of the five firms were asked what types of tests they had taken, what their estimate of the test was, and what, if anything, they believed could or should be done to improve selection testing. Several of the office employees were unable to recall specific tests they took and some did not wish to comment regarding selection tests. However, approximately 100 office employees commented about selection testing with the following ideas:

1. Took a typing test--mentioned by 73 office employees.
2. Took a clerical aptitude test--mentioned by 58 office employees.
3. Took a shorthand test--mentioned by 26 office employees.
4. Took an intelligence test--mentioned by 21 office employees.
5. Did not take any tests--mentioned by 19 office employees
6. Took a personality test--mentioned by 9 office employees.
7. Took specific office machine tests other than typing--mentioned by 7 office employees.

Again, the two predominant types of tests mentioned were typewriting and some form of aptitude or clerical ability inventory. Of those interviewed, only 69 had definite reactions to the tests as follows:

Believed the tests were good--7 employees
Believed the tests were adequate--12 employees
Felt the tests should be improved--50 employees

In addition, there seemed to be three specific criticisms mentioned by the 50 employees who believed the tests should be improved. Those criticisms are:

1. They did not believe the tests (one or more) were necessary for their particular jobs. The skills and abilities examined were not required (used) on the job.

2. They believed the administration of the tests could be improved to reduce anxiety, provide better measures or instructions.

3. They did not feel the test results provided a good indication of what they could do on the job because of the type of test, nervousness during the test, and kind of equipment and surroundings.

As reported earlier, several of the employees were unable to recall precisely the types of tests taken or how well they performed on the tests. Consequently, the reports of the office employees relating to testing may be of limited validity. However, the relationship between the nature and quality of selection instruments and the need for training and development is an area that probably should not be readily dismissed. If management is seriously interested in increased productivity and performance on the part of office personnel, it seems important to assess the level of skills possessed and required of newly employed personnel as well as to determine the amount of growth after employment.

If office employee skills do not improve and develop after employment, there may be real merit in providing programs and opportunities to improve needed skills

and abilities. Conversely, if skills are required as a condition for employment but those same skills are not used on a regular basis or are not used for an extended period of time, it is very likely that either the selection requirements should be redesigned or definite provision made to upgrade the required skills at such time as they are likely to be used on a regular basis.

In summary, there appears to be some opportunity to improve the selection testing of office employees. In addition, it is quite conceivable that numerous training needs could be identified by comparing new employee performance to desired levels of performance. It probably is not a wise plan to assume that office employees will develop, on their own, requisite skills and skill levels.

Summary of Major Findings from the Study

Based upon the interviews held with 182 business executives, managers, supervisors and office employees and their responses to numerous questions, the following statements are offered as a summary of the key findings reported within this document:

1. The need to reduce costs associated with office services and support generally was not viewed as a particularly important concern by top management. Managers and supervisors tended to attach greater importance to reduction of office costs than did their superiors.
2. Office employee productivity was rated at higher levels by managers and supervisors than by the top management representatives. As an average, top management believed office employee productivity to be approximately 70 per cent of capacity whereas managers and supervisors, as an average, believed their office employee subordinates were productively involved 80 per cent of the working day.
3. Generally, managers and supervisors desired a level of office employee productivity 10-15 per cent higher than they believed was currently being realized.
4. The managers and supervisors did <u>not</u>, as a group, believe there was a particularly important relationship between thorough training and increased office employee productivity.
5. With regard to increasing personal efficiency and productivity, the office employees as a group had difficulty identifying company incentives they believed encouraged increased efficiency on their

part. The most frequently mentioned incentives were possibilities of either a salary increase or a promotion.

6. Several incentives were suggested by the office employees that they believed would encourage them to strive for higher efficiency and productivity. The most frequently suggested incentives were:

   a. Raises (merit) based upon individual efficiency and productivity.

   b. Improved promotional opportunities.

   c. Improved superior-subordinate communications and additional feedback (recognition) for personal achievement.

   d. Review and upgrading of certain office positions.

7. As a rule, however, office employees lacked a clear understanding of company incentives based upon the fact that nearly one-half of the 134 office workers interviewed were unable to identify a single incentive offered by their companies that encouraged them to achieve higher levels of productivity and efficiency.

8. The executives, managers and supervisors generally did not view office employee performance appraisal as a matter of particularly high importance. With the exception of one firm, office employee performance was assessed in rather subjective terms with substantial variation in criteria used within each firm.

9. Many of the factors used to assess office employee performance most frequently mentioned by the managers and supervisors dealt with such personal qualities as ability to get along with other employees, attendance, punctuality, interest in

working, etc., rather than with more quantitative performance characteristics and capabilities.

10. Seventy-three (54%) of the 134 office employees had either a vague or poor understanding of the factors used to assess their performance. Twenty-seven employees seemed to have a good understanding of the assessment criteria.

11. The office employees had some definite feelings that more objective, performance-based criteria should be used in assessment of their effectiveness. The most frequently desired criterion by the office employees was one that would focus upon the amount of work completed within a specified period of time. In addition, the support personnel seemed to desire substantially more comprehensive feedback regarding their performance.

12. More than one-half (60%) of the office employees believed their performance appraisals were either fair or very fair. Conversely, only 33 per cent of the support personnel believed their salaries were fair in comparison (actual or perceived) to the salaries of other employees in their companies.

13. Executives, managers, supervisors and office employees all concurred that the most frequently used method for training newly employed office personnel was on-the-job training provided by other skilled employees.

14. After having received initial training, 43 per cent of the office employees indicated they had additional on-the-job training relating to procedures and related job aspects. On the other hand, 30 per cent of the employees said they had no additional training following initial employment activities.

15. Numerous suggestions for additional training and development opportunities desired were made by the office employees. The two suggestions most frequently offered focused upon programs that would explain more fully organization functions and activities related to their responsibilities and additional training in procedures and technical job aspects.

16. The executives (21 of 23) reported that managers and supervisors had not received formal training helping them to identify and utilize their office employee subordinates' abilities. Conversely, 21 of the 23 executives believed there could be value in a formal program that would help managers and supervisors utilize office personnel more effectively.

17. Similarly, most of the managers and supervisors believed there was considerable opportunity for improvement in utilization of office employee abilities in their firms.

18. With reference to supervisory skills and knowledge of subordinate's work, 86 (64%) of the office employees reported that their superiors were either only partially qualified or not qualified to do their (the office employees') work in contrast to the 20 per cent who believed their superiors were very qualified to perform the work of their office employee subordinates.

19. In contrast to the doubts the managers and supervisors had about the importance of in-house training as a means of increasing productivity, 72 per cent of the managers and supervisors believed in-house training was of some importance to newly employed and experienced office employees.

20. However, only four of the 25 managers and supervisors believed office employees, in general, definitely desired additional training and development opportunities.

21. Contrarily, 85 (63%) of the office employees did, in fact, have a definite desire for training and development activities that might permit them to advance to a higher position. Supporting that voiced preference is the fact that 53 per cent of the office employees desired more challenge and responsibility.

22. The most common promotional pattern for office employees (as reported by the managers and supervisors) was within their job classification.

23. Few of the office employees, on the other hand, either understood or were aware of promotional opportunities within their firms.

24. The most frequently used instruments and measures to select office personnel were skill tests in typing, shorthand and office machines as well as clerical aptitude inventories. In addition, several personal measures and assessments were used.

25. Several of the office employees reported serious reservations about the quality of selection tests used and, in some instances, suggested that parts of the selection criteria were not appropriate since the measured skills and abilities were not required in their jobs.

An attempt is made in the following section to draw conclusions from the major findings reported above. In addition, suggestions and alternative practices

will be offered regarding possible improvement for the selection, training, development and utilization of support personnel in those organizations interested in enhancing the efficiency and productivity of support systems.

Conclusions, Alternatives and Recommendations

In an effort to provide information regarding alternative actions that might be pursued based upon the findings resulting from this study, a series of conclusions and suggested alternatives are presented. It probably should be understood that the ideas presented here are based upon the premise that business firms are interested in improving and refining certain practices relating to the selection, training, development and utilization of support personnel. Furthermore, it is assumed that firms are interested in strategies by which they can attain higher levels of productivity and efficiency within their office and support systems. Therefore, based upon the above premises and assumptions, the following comments are offered for consideration.

1. There appears to be considerable opportunity within each of the firms included in this study to improve the efficiency and productivity of support personnel. It is believed substantial efficiency increases could be realized through: (a) improved training of new office employees; (b) more exact identification of specific employee abilities and desires; and, (c) setting of improved support employee work goals and subsequent performance assessment. It seems unlikely that improved office efficiency can realistically be anticipated until: (a) each new office employee is trained by a qualified trainer (one possessing sufficient job skills, company understanding, procedural knowhow as well as the desire and ability to train); (b) each office employee has a very clear understanding of specific performance goals, objectives and standards; and (c) each office employee's performance is assessed through the use of rather objective, measurable standards and criteria relating directly to his or her performance goals.

2. In many cases there may be merit in undertaking thorough job analyses with the intention of revealing specific job requirements and specifications, work loads, major activities performed, amount of time spent performing major and peripheral activities, and specific levels of skills and performance deemed desirable and satisfactory. Without the above information it is questionable whether the efficiency gains recommended in number 1 above could be realized.

3. On the whole, it seemed that executives, managers and supervisors accorded, at the time of the study, less than high importance to the reduction of office costs. Such an attitude could, quite conceivably, result in substantially higher costs than justified. Thus, it is suggested that top management consider seriously the appropriateness of present cost analyses as well as opportunities to improve overall support system efficiency and effectiveness. Without top management support, however, it is questionable whether meaningful and lasting improvements can be effected.

4. Relating rather closely to the first three statements is the matter of office employee reactions to attempts oriented toward increasing efficiency and productivity. It is suggested that office employees, on the whole, will view favorably efforts to reach higher productivity if they can be assured that their personal efforts will be appropriately and equitably rewarded. However, until a firm is able to specify rather clearly exactly what each office employee is expected to achieve as well as provide objective feedback about performance it is doubtful that rewards (merit increases, etc.) can be administered equitably. And, it is the investigator's personal experience that subjective measures of performance tend to result in inequitable salary and merit increases subsequently resulting in, and possibly encouraging, mediocre performance.

5. Based upon office employee reports, managers and supervisors need to communicate more explicitly with their subordinates about company policies, functions, benefits and incentives. Very few of the employees interviewed possessed a clear understanding of the above areas but were, overwhelmingly, interested in knowing more about each of the areas. Additionally, it would seem that management could well benefit by examining the merits of implementing the incentives suggested by the office employees such as improved communications, feedback, and recognition; improved promotional opportunities; and, improved assessment of individual performance resulting in more equitable merit increases.
6. Office employees should be provided with more explicit information about the specific criteria used to assess their performance. Ideally, such information would be provided and explained to each employee during initial training and at several other times prior to the employee's first formal evaluation. Again, before managers and supervisors can provide information about such objective criteria they must first come to grips with the needs suggested in recommendations numbered two and three. Certainly, however, there is substantial evidence from the findings of the study that office employees do not, at present, perceive their salaries and salary increases to be particularly related to personal achievement and performance.
7. Business firms should consider seriously the relative merits of training and development programs and activities for office employees in addition to initial-employment training. If there is a sincere interest in increased productivity, effective employee utilization and promotion of qualified employees, it then seems apparent that additional attempts should be made to develop abilities of those employees interested in

and desirous of advancement. Without such developmental efforts, it is likely that employee potential will be inconsistently identified resulting, perhaps, in office employee feelings of discrimination and disinterest by management in the growth of support personnel.

8. Initial employee training should be approached much more seriously if improved employee performance is desired. Current practices of having other employees serve as primary trainers of new employees is subject to serious challenge in terms of effectiveness. Unless the employee-trainers are skilled in training approaches, possess a good understanding of job procedures, and are desirous of performing the trainer role, it is quite possible that new employees will: (a) be taught improper (or at least inefficient) procedures; (b) acquire incorrect or biased information about the firm and its personnel; (c) be trained in a hurried and ineffective manner; and (d) develop poor attitudes at the outset that could have damaging effects upon both morale and productivity.

9. There could be definite benefit resulting from in-house training programs for managers and supervisors of office personnel if such programs were to focus on at least some of the following topics and concerns:

   a. Determining and communicating criteria and objectives for office employees.

   b. Understanding the skills needed, possessed and utilized by office employees in specific office positions.

   c. Basic methods and approaches to training new employees.

   d. Communications with subordinates--what, when, how and why.

   e. How to evaluate office employee performance on an objective basis. How to communicate such evaluations to employees.

f. Determining the skills needed by office employees for specific positions.

g. Approaches to utilizing office employee abilities effectively. Assessing abilities, determining employee goals and interests, delegating, and follow-up.

10. Business firms should reconsider criteria and requirements traditionally used in the selection of managers and supervisors. Conceivably, experienced and qualified office personnel may well have the requisite abilities and potential for various management and supervisory positions even though they may not possess a college degree or education. Critical in such considerations is identifying those employees having both the interest in and potential for such openings. Likewise, additional training and development opportunities may reveal talents and interests currently unidentified.

11. Business managers could profit by providing more explicit and comprehensive information about career paths and promotional opportunities within their firms for office employees. Generally, the support personnel interviewed were desirous of information relating to possible advancement opportunities. Substantial numbers of good employees could be lost or, at best, underutilized unless greater efforts are made to advance qualified personnel.

12. Serious consideration should be given to revision of criteria, instruments and standards used in the selection of office personnel. Currently, several such factors could be challenged in terms of both their validity and reliability. It would seem that a critical criterion for use in evaluating selection measures could be one based upon internal validation at present positions and that the criteria be as objectively defined as possible.

In summary, there appear to be numerous opportunities for improvement of practices and policies within business firms as they relate to employment, training, development and general management of office personnel. Most of the improvement possibilities are ones that have been proven to have value and merit through experience in both other areas of management and other functions; but are also ones that have not, for a number of reasons, been applied to the area of office support systems management. As a result, those firms having an interest in increased productivity, efficiency and improved utilization of office personnel could, quite beneficially, direct additional concern to the suggestions and recommendations offered. The future may well show the area of office systems and office personnel management to be one justifying concern as well as one that offers substantial opportunity for management advances.